



**Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão**

UNIVERSIDADE TÉCNICA DE LISBOA

DESDE 1911

**MASTERS**

**INFORMATION SYSTEMS' MANAGEMENT**

**MASTERS' FINAL WORK**

**DISSERTATION**

**SOCIAL NETWORKS**

**ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ITS USE IN JOB HUNTING**

**MICAELA SOFIA FARIA COURELAS**

**SEPTEMBER 2014**



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**SUPERVISION: PROFESSOR PEDRO TEIXEIRA ISAÍAS**

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## **Abstract**

Portugal is going through an unprecedented unemployment crisis. Highly trained personnel are emigrating in search for better work conditions in their studies' area since they cannot find well-remunerated jobs for the functions they studied for so many years.

Job seekers that stay in Portugal try to find work in many ways. Some settle for a job beneath their potential, others search through the web using social (/professional) networks. Sites like Facebook and LinkedIn are digital tools, being many times used as virtual Markets, full of opportunities for the unemployed and also with large information databases that help recruiters in the search for candidates.

This study will make a comparison between recruiters and candidates' perspectives on job-hunting through social networks: specifically how Facebook and LinkedIn might give job seekers opportunities and how recruiters expose these opportunities.

Obtained results showed that Facebook is wider spread trough candidates preferences, while recruiters tend to use more LinkedIn. In terms of what is posted they are tuned, both agreeing that curricular information is the key for a successful profile. Recruiters feel that there is too much information online, which makes talent hunting harder. Candidates consider that misleading information online is a very negative feature of social media. Both of them see lack of privacy as a big disadvantage and networking as the best advantage.

## **Keywords**

Recruiters, Candidates, Social Networks, Job-hunting, Facebook and LinkedIn.

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## 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 – Theme Context

Given the Portuguese social and demographic situation it would be interesting to develop a study that could help to improve the current conditions of the Portuguese employability. Thus combining information systems to the rising rates of unemployment and emigration (consequently) the title “Social Networks: advantages and disadvantages of its use in job hunting” arisen. This dissertation will cover the theme social networks as a database of job candidates. The study will explore how social networks are a tool that help recruiters fill in a vacancy. It will focus its analysis in two major social networks, Facebook and LinkedIn. The main aim is to inform candidates of their possibilities using these tools.

### 1.2 – Theme justification and choice

Nowadays, in Europe and especially in Portugal there is a big phenomenon of population aging. Yet, the small portion of active population is crossing an unprecedented unemployment crisis.

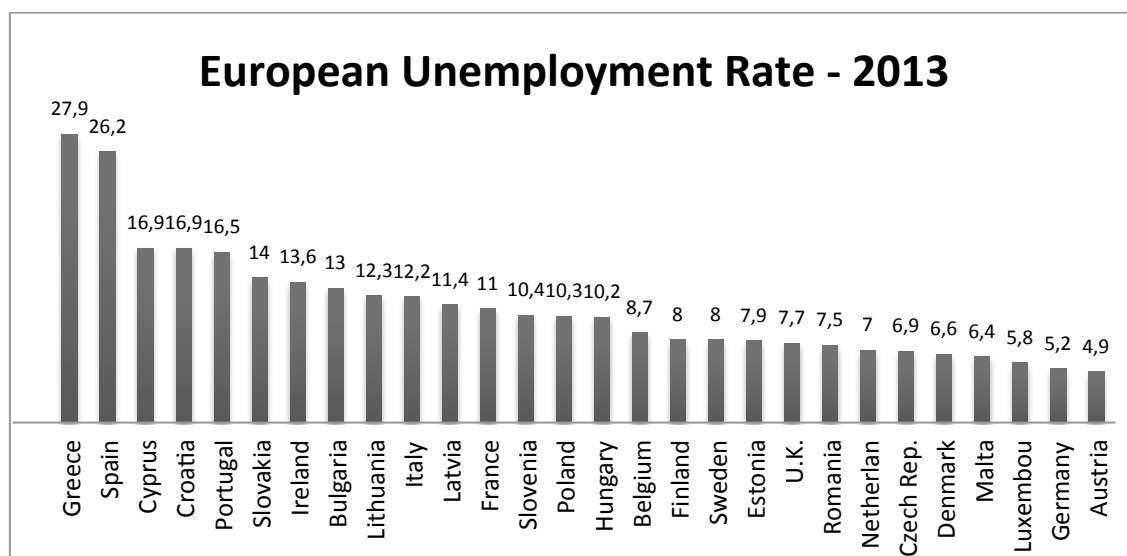


Figure 1 – European unemployment rates (adapted from Eurostat’s “European Unemployment Rate”)

The national unemployment reaches values never seen before since Portugal joined the European Union. In 2013, 16.5% of the workforce was unemployed. The E.U. is also greatly affected by this crisis, particularly the southern countries. A large percentage of



unemployed people are young college graduates. The majority of students that complete a college degree have no jobs in Portugal. Thus, the generation "neither nor" appeared: qualified people who have completed their studies but neither study nor work.

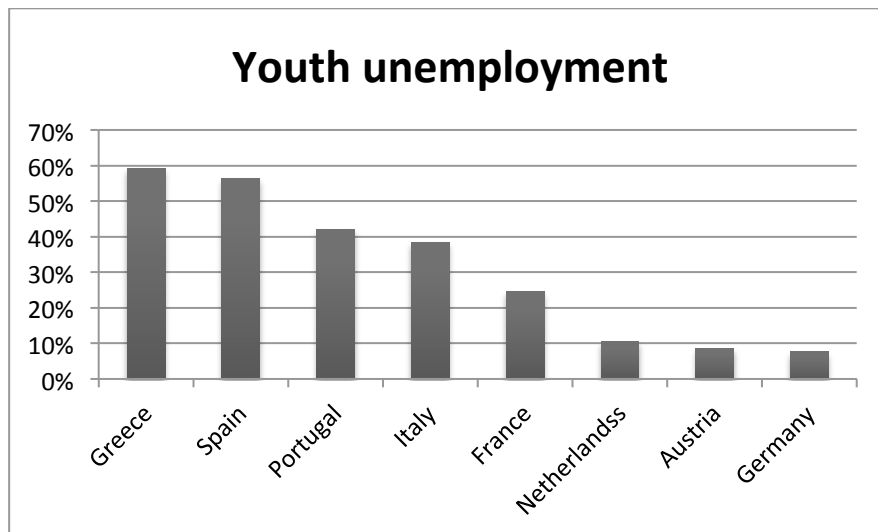


Figure 2 – Youth unemployment (adapted from Eurostat’s “Youth unemployment”)

This situation of widespread unemployment is a direct cause for emigration, which leads to a reduction in the birth rate (women of childbearing age emigrate), the reduction of skilled labor force (the most highly skilled people seek jobs with higher benefits / remuneration abroad) and the increase of population aging.

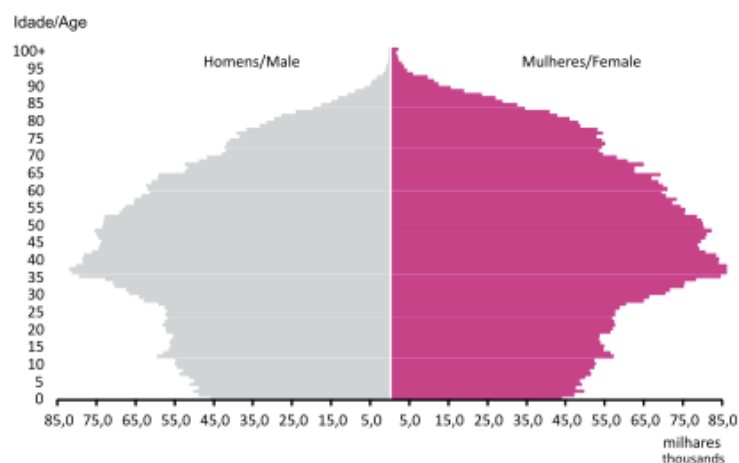


Figure 3 – Age pyramid, Portugal, 2012 (Source: INE)

### 1.3 – Goals

The general goal of this study is to evaluate the importance of social networks in the recruitment process for the recruiters and candidates.

The specific goals are the following:

- To analyze how recruiters search for candidates on Facebook and LinkedIn;
- To identify which advantages and disadvantages does each one brings to candidates and recruiters in terms of:
  - Information accuracy;
  - Type of contact between recruiter and candidate;
  - Safety and privacy of its users.
- To make a comparison of candidates and recruiters perceptions of the utilization of social networks for job hunting;
- To understand if candidates use social networks in their job search and, in case of its use, how do they use it.

#### **1.4 – Dissertation structure**

This dissertation contains seven chapters. The first chapter is an overall view of the dissertation that introduces the reader to the topic, presenting the scientific background and goals (general and specific).

In the second chapter, a review of literature covering key concepts for a better understanding of the study, such as **social networks**, **recruitment firms**, **Facebook** and **LinkedIn**, is presented.

In the third chapter, a framework and the dissertation research questions are presented.

The fourth chapter reveals the methodology used and the data collection techniques.

Then, in the fifth and sixth chapter, the results from the questionnaires and interviews are presented in the data analysis, giving the chance to conclude the advantages and disadvantages of using social networks as a recruitment tool.

Finally, in the seventh chapter, the main conclusions and limitations of the study as well as the suggestions for possible future research are shown.

## **2 – LITERATURE REVIEW**

## 2.1 - Context

This section will present the key concepts of the dissertation. It will make reference to social networks, specifically Facebook and LinkedIn, candidates, recruitment firms, recruiters and the importance of social networks in a recruiter routine.

## 2.2 – Social Networks

The Oxford Dictionary defines Social Network as “a dedicated website or other application which enables users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, images, etc.” This is a very simplify definition of the term “social network” and this study will focus specifically on online social networks that improve the chances of job candidates finding a job vacancy.

Other theorists have a different approach on how to define it, for example in *the Study of Social Media Communication: Analysis of Science Communication through Social Networking Sites with special reference to Scientists*: “Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighborhood subdivision, if you will. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and high schools, it is most popular online” (Jothi & Neelamalar, 2010). These authors claim that there is a particular situation that makes individuals join over the same interest.

The journal of computer-mediated communications in *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship* defines it as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). These authors emphasize the personal connections aspect of networking, not focusing as much as the previews ones on personal interest.

Overall social networks are considered a public platform, in which different individuals are connected by a relationship. These connections are usually generated by a common element, like a friendship in the real world or a mutual interest in a specific field. They might be used for leisure like getting in touch with old friends, playing online games, or finding out about a particular topic. According to *Social Networks Become Social*

*Entertainment* research “consumers believe social networks provide a higher value experience compared with other forms of entertainment” (Edelman’s, 2010). They might also be used with a professional goal like expanding the professional network, finding job opportunities or improving work topics knowledge. The Queensland Government posted an article on its official website saying that there are 5 ways social media can help to improve a business: promote the name of your brand and business; tell customers about your goods and services; find out what customers think of your business; attract new customers and build stronger relationships with existing customers (Queensland Government, 2010).

### **2.2.1 – Facebook**

Facebook is a free, public social network created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. It began as a college networking website and has grown to include anyone with access to Internet (Facebook, 2014). Even though it was not a groundbreaking platform, since there were other social networks online before this one, it changed the way how social network users relate to one another.

This social network enables its users to share pictures, videos and personal notes with their online friends. It also allows them to create pages and groups divided by topics, which may or may not be public. It is possible for any user to give feedback on any post through “likes” or comments on that same post. Facebook tends to be associated with leisure and group interaction, but it is more and more a platform used for work and business related purposes.

A great amount of people use this network to find a job but “Facebook appears to be a highly under-utilized network for recruiting” (Undercover Recruiter, based on 2012 Bullhorn Reach Social Recruiting Activity Report), i.e. recruiters tend to use other tools, like LinkedIn, job posting websites, company sites etc., to fill in job vacancies. One should wonder if this is one of the mistakes candidates are making that leads to lack of success in job-hunting. Once candidates are actively using this tool to find a job but recruiters seem to be focusing their efforts on finding a candidate elsewhere, should candidates rethink the use of Facebook?

There is an average of 584 million daily active users on Facebook (Facebook, 2014). Some of them use it solely as an entertainment tool, others as a work tool (in marketing

and social media jobs), others for job-hunting, as mentioned earlier and some for all of the above. These users are risking their security online and offline by exposing information about themselves. “Risks range from identity theft to online and physical stalking; from embarrassment to price discrimination and blackmailing” (Gross, & Acquisti, 2005).

Through this study it will be possible to realize that some people do give misleading (or cautionary) information about themselves. 11% of Facebook users do not use their real name and 49% do not have an identifiable profile picture.

Category	Percentage Facebook Profiles
Identifiable	61%
Semi-Identifiable	19%
Group Image	8%
Joke Image	12%

Table I - Categorization of user identifiability based on manual evaluation of a randomly selected subset of 100 images from both Facebook profiles. (Source: *Information Revelation and Privacy in Online Social Networks - The Facebook case*. Gross, R., & Acquisti, A., 2005).

The health care journalist Akshat Rathi considers that Facebook is misleading and that people do not have enough lucidity to use Facebook. There are two reasons why he makes such statement. The first is that people only post the good parts of their lives and yet they tend to compare their own lives with their virtual friends unrealistic online lives. The second is that people add some posts that are not meant to be seen by everyone and the consequences of this fast and wide spread information might be harmful for posters and viewers.

This does not mean that Facebook is bad tool or that it should not be used. There are also many advantages in using Facebook. Donna Cosmato, a sales management professional, wrote an article in which she considered worldwide connectivity the main advantage of social networking. Other advantages according to her article are commonality of Interest and Real-Time Information Sharing.

Overall there should be caution when using Facebook to find a job. But there are positive aspects as well as negative ones. *The little red suit* summarizes it clearly:

"College students and young professionals who are using Facebook for professional networking need to be aware of the amount and type of information they are sharing. That said, many young professionals I know prefer using it for professional networking namely because it showcases you as a whole person" (Monhollan, 2008).

### **2.2.2 – LinkedIn**

"LinkedIn is the largest platform dedicated solely to professional networking. With over 115 million registered users in over 200 countries as of July 2011, LinkedIn represents an exemplar for those scholars seeking to understand the interplay of employment and social networking" (LinkedIn, 2014). It enables its users to "interact with other professionals in their fields, locate potential employers through company pages and employees, and participate in forums relevant to their professions" (Fawley 2013, p.31).

Kasia Mikoluk describes it as "a particularly valuable business tool; over 200 million people are members, including hiring managers from many top companies." (Mikoluk, 2013) - which means that there are opportunities to contact and connect with this recruiters and possibility find a job - "Your profile is designed to function as an online resume, detailing your education, career history (with recommendations from your colleagues), and creative portfolio." (Mikoluk, 2013)– this enables a dissemination of curricular data in way that could be done before professional social networks appeared.

Stephanie Rosendahl considers that LinkedIn builds credibility, since "referrals gained through a professional network such as LinkedIn are more qualified and LinkedIn offers a more efficient way to build your referral base" (Rosendahl, 2013) . Another beneficial aspect of LinkedIn, from her point of view, is the possibility to follow companies and its employees.

Jessica Key, from the Indianapolis Recorder, believes that there are also negative aspects to LinkedIn. According to her "LinkedIn certainly has made networking easier, but experts say that professionals will always appreciate personal interactions such as handshakes, written thank-you notes and professional conversation" (Key, 2012). A professional network such as LinkedIn will never replace a real life contact or interview. Even though it might help get one (interview).

Another disadvantage of LinkedIn is the security decrease. Debra L. Bruce wrote an article in which she refers that "to reap full advantage of LinkedIn, however, the user

typically must disclose information such as current and past employers, as well as current contact information” (Bruce, 2010). All this information is meant to be protected but it is online and there is always the possibility of a cyber-attack so “the user assumes considerably more risk of identity theft in the event of a breach in LinkedIn’s security” (Bruce, 2010).

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Facebook Groups</b>	<b>LinkedIn Groups</b>
<b>Audience</b>	For small groups wishing to collaborate and discuss any topic or issue.	Professionals seeking to network and discuss any topic or issue.
<b>Visibility</b>	<p>Open: Anyone can see the group, its members and what they post.</p> <p>Closed: Anyone can see the group and its members. Only members see posts.</p> <p>Secret: Only members see the group.</p>	Contributions can be member-only or open to all LinkedIn members
<b>Admission</b>	Members can add Friends. Non-members can request to join.	Auto-Join or Request to Join (must be approved).
<b>Web notifications</b>	Posts appear in "Notifications"	Posts to Group

	list.	
<b>Email content notifications</b>	User customizable	User customizable
<b>Collaboration</b>	Shared docs, shared albums and chats.	None
<b>Indexed by Search Engines</b>	No	Yes
<b>Personalized URL</b>	No	No
<b>Content Moderation</b>	No	Yes
<b>Spam/Language Filtering</b>	No	No
<b>Email messaging by admins</b>	No	Yes, up to once a week.
<b>Group Chat</b>	Yes	No
<b>Simple Polls</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>HootSuite Supports</b>	Yes	No
<b>Built-in metrics</b>	No	No
<b>Events</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Wall posts</b>	Yes	No
<b>Photos</b>	Yes	No
<b>Members can contact other members privately</b>	Yes	Yes, if connected

Table II - Facebook Groups vs. LinkedIn Groups (Adapted from Forum One)

## 2.3 – Candidates



Candidates are job seekers. There are two kinds of people who search for a job: “Active job candidates are those currently unemployed, who represent 10 percent or less of the total workforce at any given time. Passive job candidates are those who are currently employed and not putting a lot of energy into seeking a new position, but who would consider making a job change if the conditions were right.” (Joos, 2008) In this study both of them will be analyzed.

Most of unemployed people in Portugal are young and recently graduated. But there are also candidates of a different age range (older) and lower level of education/training (INE, 2012).

## **2.4 – Recruiters**

Recruiters are professional specialized in filling job vacancies. They search for the most suited profile to fit a job opening. According to *Maringá Management* recruitment as a part of human resources management has benefited tremendously with the development of the information technologies (Mitter and Orlandini, 2005)..

Recruiters might work in the human resources department of a firm or work in an outsourcing firm of human resources. In this last case usually their main function is to select the most appropriate candidate to fill in a job vacancy.

## **2.5 – Recruitment firms**

One of the candidates’ methods to look for jobs is the usage of recruitment firms. Recruitment firms are organizations that have job vacancies for various professional activities. Each of these firms has its own database of contacts, which contains client companies, job seekers and vacancies available. In addition to its internal database, in order to find workers to fill their vacancies, its employees (recruiters) use also social networks.

There are many recruitment firms in Portugal, most of which are multinational companies. They differ in the type of profile they search. Some look for more educated and high hierarchical level profiles, others look for more simple profiles, simply demanding skills for a blue-collar job.

## **3 – FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This chapter presents a framework to identify how social networks help candidates finding jobs as well as the advantages of their use for recruitment agencies and job seekers. The proposed framework is a mix of all the important concepts for this study.

### **3.1 – Most commonly used social networks**

According to Columbia University's career opportunities department, Social Media is a great tool to find a job. Many websites and blogs consider Facebook and LinkedIn the most useful online instruments in job hunting. The Bullhorn Reach report states that in 2012 98% of recruiters used LinkedIn and 33% used Facebook. It also brings to the public knowledge that 48% of recruiters use LinkedIn exclusively.

The first research question of this dissertation is: Are Facebook and LinkedIn the most commonly use social networks in job search by candidates and recruiters?

### **3.2 – Social networks advantages and disadvantages**

Through literature review, it was possible to conclude that it would be interesting to investigate the main benefits and weaknesses of social networks. Kasia Mikoluk considered some advantages in her blog such as networking, sharing a resume or contact companies; and some disadvantages such as posting something that can harm its author (Mikoluk, 2013).

The second research question is: Are the main (dis/)advantages of social networks the ones referred to in literature review?

Candidates' point of view	Recruiters' point of view
---------------------------	---------------------------

<b>Social Networks Advantages</b>	<b>- Dissemination of personal data</b> (Jothi & Neelamar, 2010)	<b>- Dissemination of curricular data</b> (Monhollan, 2008)
	<b>- Professional Networking</b> (Queensland Government, 2014)	
	<b>- Dissemination of curricular data</b> (Monhollan, 2008)	<b>- Dissemination of personal data</b> (Jothi & Neelamar, 2010)
	<b>- Entertainment</b> (Edelman Digital, 2010)	
	<b>- Social Networking</b> (Cosmato, 2013).	<b>- Finding Profiles (Mikoluk)</b> (Mikoluk, 2013)

Table III – Advantages of social networks for candidates and recruiters (Source: author)

	<b>Candidates' point of view</b>	<b>Recruiters' point of view</b>
<b>Social Networks Disadvantages</b>	<b>- Privacy decrease</b> (Rathi, 2013)	<b>- Misleading Information</b> (Rathi, 2013)
	<b>- Safety decrease</b> (Gross, & Acquisti, 2005)	
	<b>- Confidentiality decrease</b> (Bruce, 2010)	<b>- Lack of personal contact</b> (Key, 2012)

Table IV – Disadvantages of social networks for candidates and recruiters (Source: author)

### 3.3 – Divulging data online

The American Psychological Association considers that “too often, people don't think twice about disclosing their personal information online”. There are risks associated with this lack of judgment. Social networkers should consider that “once information is posted to a social networking site, it is no longer private” (FBI). Not only a meaningless post can stain their image but also even their personal integrity might be endangered.

The third research question has emerged: Is it safe to divulge data in social networks?

	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>
<b>Security</b>	Network	Friends
<b>Users links</b>	Friends	Connections
<b>Information</b>	Basic Information	Personal Information
<b>Birthday</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Professional</b>	Work & Education	Work experience
<b>Geographic</b>	Living	Location
<b>Username</b>	Name	Name

Table V – What information can you post in a social networks? (adapted from trendmicro.com)

#### 4 – METHODOLOGY

#### **4.1 – Study type**

This is an exploratory study. It aims to develop the knowledge of social networks as a tool for job search. According to Saunders, an exploratory study is a way to find what is happening and search for new knowledge (Saunders, 2007).

The methodology consists of conducting a comparative study between two realities. The goal is to perceive the impact of social networking in recruitment (for candidates and recruiters).

#### **4.2 – Sampling method and sample**

A judgmental sampling was used, i.e. a non-probability sampling technique in which the population elements are defined by the researcher based on their job situation and professional judgment. In this case unemployed people were the target population for the questionnaires.

Age	< 18
-----	------

	18 - 25
	26 - 35
	36 - 45
	46 - 55
	56 - 65
	> 65
Years of experience	< 2
	2 - 4
	5 - 10
	11 - 20
	> 20
Educational Level	Middle School
	High school
	Undergraduate
	Master
	Ph. D.
Type of job	Internship
	1st job
	Temp. job
	Fixed-term job
	No term contract
	Company board

Table VI – Questionnaire sample's profile (Source: author)

#### 4.3 – Data collection

There were two different processes to make the data collection. The first was an online survey lodged in *Qualtrics* platform and divulged by Facebook pages and groups related to unemployment and job search. The snowball sampling method (Isaías & Miranda, 2012) was chosen because it was the fastest way to reach a considerable amount of people in the circumstances of the study (looking for a job opportunity).

The second was an interview conducted with professional recruiters of two different companies, via e-mail, in order to perceive what matters to them in the search process. This was the only method in which the interviewees were willing to participate.

#### **4.4 – Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was distributed to candidates to determine the importance of social networks in job search and compare it with the perspective of recruiters.

#### **4.5 – Questionnaire operationalization**

The candidates' characterization was achieved through questions such as their age, experience, intended job and their level of education

The perception of social networks as a job search tool was found through dichotomic answers (yes or no) and multiple-choice answers.

#### **4.6 – Interview**

Interviews were conducted with recruiters, one from a recruitment firm and another recruiter from an information technology company (that is expanding the number of employees) in order to perceive their experiences with social networks and what they feel to be the strengths and weaknesses of its use.

## **5 – QUESTIONNAIRES' RESULTS**

An online survey was performed in order to understand how candidates perceive the social networks function when they are searching for a job. The survey was developed in *Qualtrics* - which is a private online data collection software with login provided by ISEG. Through *Qualtrics* it is possible to arrange the collected data in to tables and charts, which will allow a better understanding of the data and a solid construction of information provided by the candidates answers. The survey was posted on Facebook groups and pages regarding unemployment (usually accessed by job seekers).

In order to represent the unemployed population a sample of 165 individuals was enquired.

Through the survey answers it was possible to acknowledge that social networks are the tool of choice to find a job. 70% of the candidates consider this a good tool to reach a recruiter.

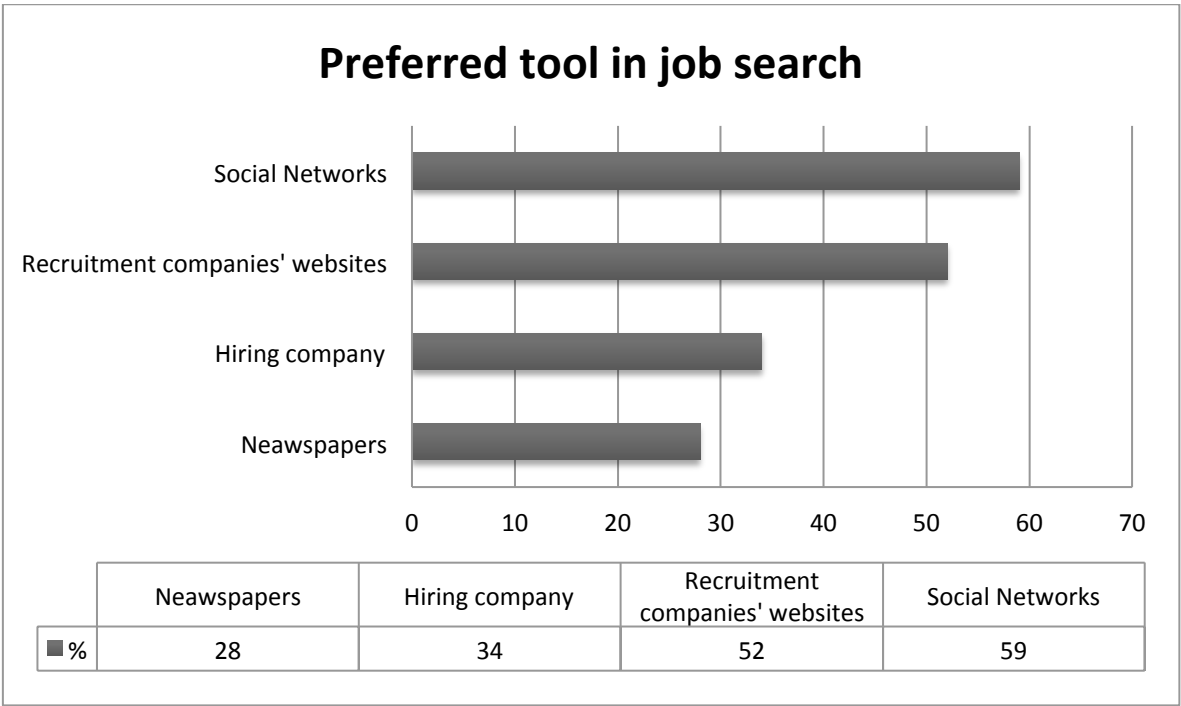


Figure 4 – Preferred tools in job search



It is also possible to confirm that, in fact, Facebook and LinkedIn are the most commonly used social networks, in job search, by candidates. 63% of the respondents use Facebook to search for a job, 43% use LinkedIn and only 17% use other social network.

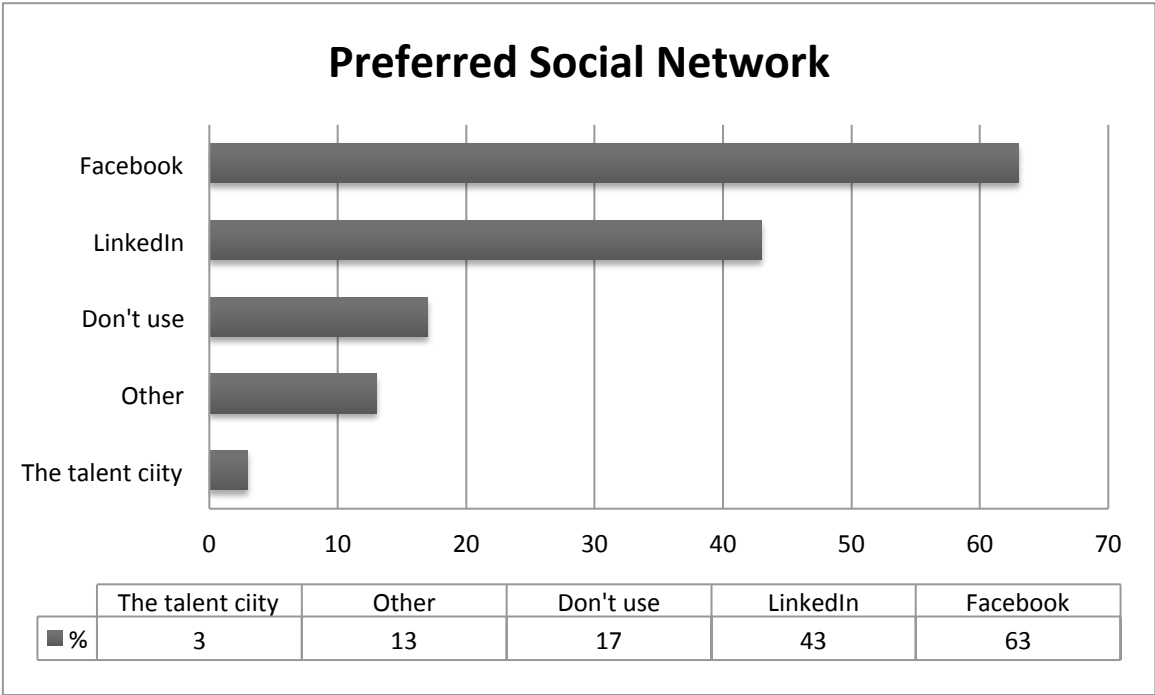


Figure 5 – Preferred social network in job search

The respondents opinion towards the question of how important are social networks in order for a recruiter to decide between two candidates is torn, 45% feel that it does influence the recruiters opinion and 55% feel that it does not.

There is a lot of different data divulged on social networks. One might assume that while job hunting candidates would post solely curricular information, yet that is not accurate. 85% of people post curricular information but they also post photographs, contact information, events in which they have participated, pictures or texts of their interest. And even their hobbies.

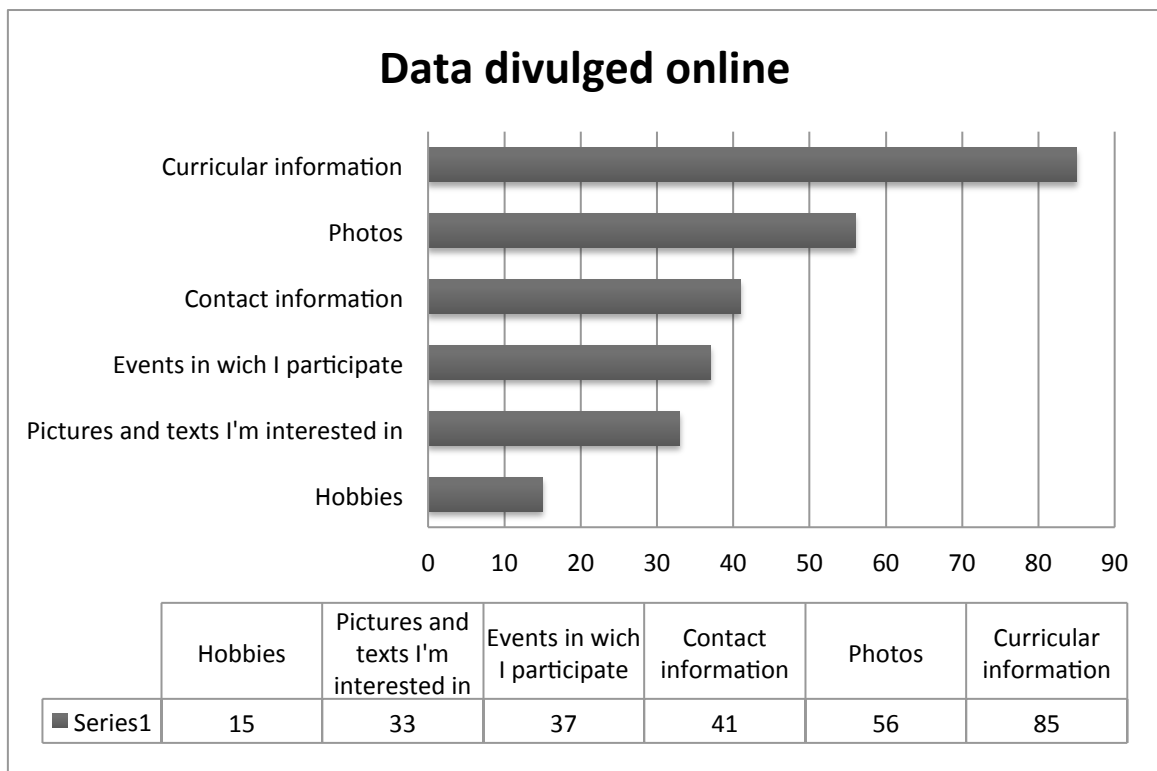


Figure 6 –Data divulged on social networks

### 5.1 – Social Networks advantages

Over half of the respondents consider that social and professional networking is a great advantage of social networks. 48% of them consider it a great tool to disseminate curricular data and only 16% thinks of this instrument as a way to propagate personal data.

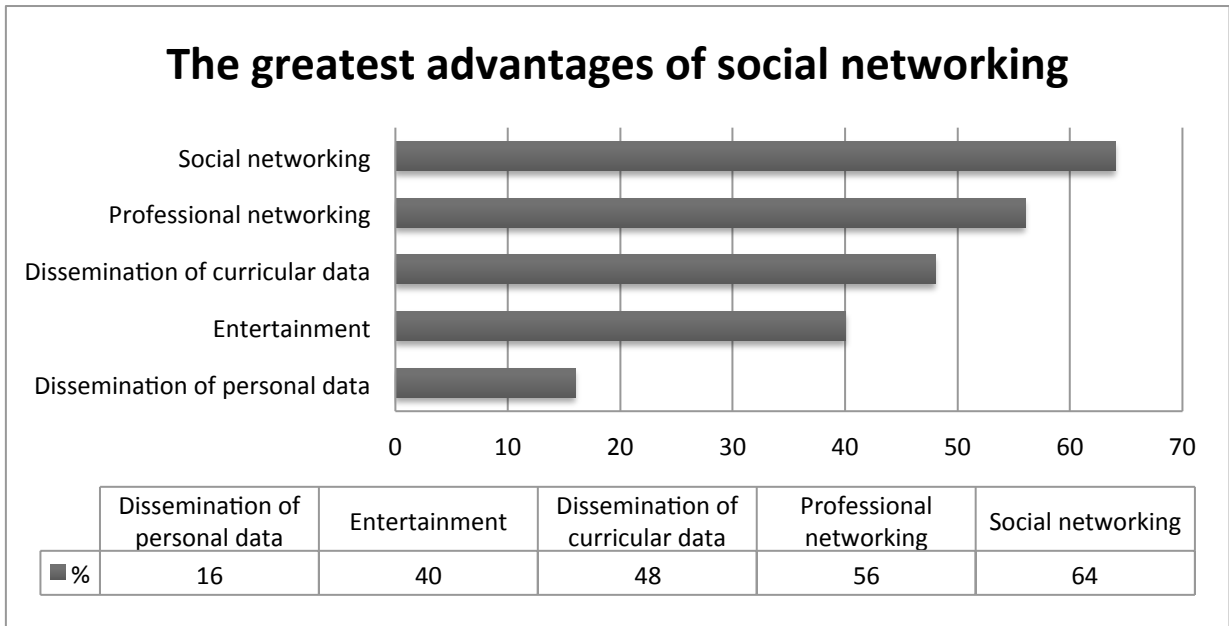


Figure 7 – The greatest advantages of social networking

## 5.2 – Social Networks disadvantages

54% of candidates feel like misleading information is the worst disadvantage of social networks. Privacy decrease is the second most pointed disadvantage. Safety decrease, confidentiality decrease and lack of personal contact have the same percentage, 39%.

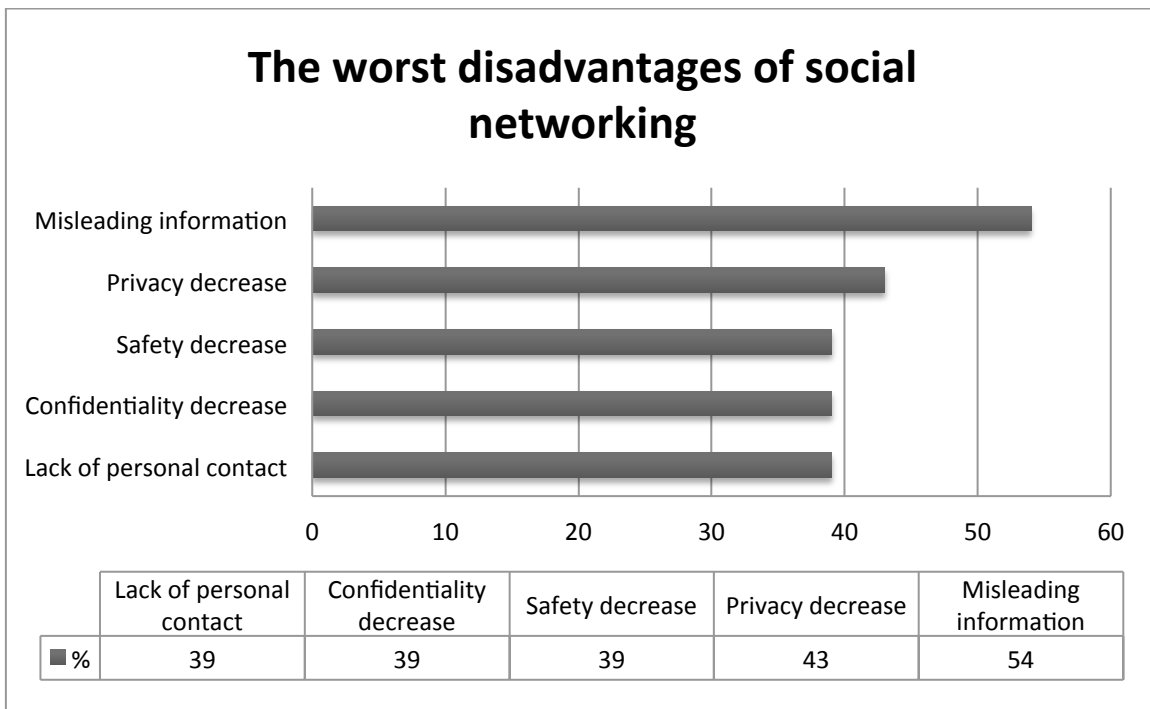


Figure 8 – The worst disadvantages of social networking

## **6 – INTERVIEWS' RESULTS**

Two recruiter interviews were held via e-mail in order to understand what recruiters look for when they search for online profiles. Both companies choose to stay anonymous, therefore interviewees' names will not be revealed.

The first recruiter works for a high profile international recruitment company in the technology department (HR recruiter). Before this job she has worked as a HR specialist and as a recruiter in another recruitment company. She is in the HR area for eight years and recruits experienced candidates for high profile firms.

The second recruiter is the co-owner of the I.T. Company. He works in and the seven years as a HR manager of the company are the only experience he has had as a recruiter (IT recruiter). He recruits different hierarchical level candidates to integrate into his firm.

Recruiters do use social networks to find information about a candidate. Their favourite tool is LinkedIn since it is "the most useful tool to understand the candidate's career path and purpose" never the less Facebook allows recruiters to understand people's profile through their posts. The most relevant information in a social network profile are the professional accomplishments although comments and photos published might show a side of the candidate that makes the recruiter choose someone else.

There is a common understanding that LinkedIn is a much more restricted and professional network than other sites. Recruiters expect to find the profiles they are looking for there.

Social networks should not be considered a fighting arena. Recruiters look for candidates that fit the job needs but they do not decide which one will get the opening until there is an interview. Never the less a profile with negative information might exclude the candidate from the possibility's list.

### **6.1 – Social Networks advantages**

"Since social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, began allowing organizations to create profiles and become active members, organizations have started incorporating these strategies into their public relations programming." (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas 2009) Recruiters consider this to be one of the best benefits

for candidates since social networks allow a closer contact with the hiring company and more information about it.

Another great advantage of these online tools for candidates is networking which enables job seekers to show their professional and social accomplishments.

The biggest advantage for recruiters is the amount of information they can access. Everyday many people access social networks, which give an open field of opportunities to find the perfect candidate for a job. Recruiters feel that there are other advantages: “On Facebook you get to see a side of the candidate you would not see in an interview” and LinkedIn compiles the most important activities of a candidates’ work life.

## **6.2 – Social Networks disadvantages**

According to the article by Wilson and Graham (2012), *A Review of Facebook Research in the Social Sciences*, people are disclosing personal information on social networks despite potential risks. The interviewed recruiters agree that there is a risk associated with having a profile online. On the one hand is hard to remove online content, on the other hand “inappropriate comments/photos might ruin their (candidates) chances of getting an interview”.

There are more than 1 billion users on Facebook and more than 187 million members on LinkedIn (Sharma, 2013). Even though the amount of information online enables recruiters to have a lot of candidates to choose from, it can be a bad thing. The choice is so wide that it might be difficult to find someone worth interviewing. Another disadvantage is the lack of information veracity control which may mislead a recruiter.

Although “25% of users on Facebook don’t bother with any kind of privacy control” (Sharma, 2013) recruiters advise caution when it comes to divulging information and posting “Information that endangers your security or that could be used against you”.

## **6.3 – Recruitment tools’ effectiveness**

Recruiters’ opinion on the effectiveness of social networks to fulfil a vacancy is not uniform. One believes that jobs posted online reach more people and that LinkedIn is the best tool to find a candidate the other feels that job posting sites are the best tool to find a candidate “because respondents usually match the required job skills”.

	<b>Recruitment Firm Recruiter</b>	<b>I.T. Company Recruiter</b>
<b>Recruitment profile searched</b>	Experienced candidates for high profile firms	Different hierarchical level candidates
<b>Uses Social Networks to find candite's information</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Social Networks to investigate the candidates</b>	LinkedIn and Facebook	LinkedIn
<b>Data searched</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past jobs</li> <li>• Projects</li> <li>• Comments</li> <li>• Photos</li> </ul>	Resumes
<b>Use Social Networks as a way to decide between two candidates</b>	No	No
<b>Social Networks advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidate's professional journey</li> <li>• Closer contact between the company and the candidate</li> <li>• Information on the company's goals, culture and values</li> </ul>	The amount of people that browse that network every day
<b>Social Networks disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much information</li> <li>• Prejudicial information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not everything is true</li> <li>• Data protection</li> </ul>
<b>Confidentiality, privacy and security</b>	Use common sense	People should be careful
<b>Veracity</b>	You should confirm	Not realiable
<b>Job offers published on Social Networks have a greater response</b>	Yes	Yes but other tools have a better response
<b>Tool of choice when seeking a candidate</b>	LinkedIn	Job posting sites

Table VII – Recruiters' answers comparison (Source: author)

## **7 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 – Main conclusions**

From the study analysis it is possible to conclude that social networks are a powerful tool for recruiters, since it helps them fill in a vacancy and it is the tool of choice to find a job, 70% of the candidates consider this a good tool to reach a recruiter.

Talent-hunters search for candidates on social networks. LinkedIn is the tool of choice but they also use Facebook. These two are the most popular social networks for both respondents (candidates and recruiters). Recruiters try to find a professional profile that can fulfill the job requirements and, at the same time, they search for possible indicators that the personal profile is not the most adequate (through posts, comments, pictures posted or endorsed/“liked” by a candidate). Candidates tend to post mainly curricular information on social networks so it is reasonable to assume that this is a point in which they are in the same “tune”.

Most candidates are aware that recruiters do not decide between two candidates solely based on their online profiles comparison. Even though it might influence the decision of which candidates will go to a personal interview.

Both interviewed company representatives consider networking as the best advantage of social networks, since there are so many people browsing thru them everyday. Even though candidates find social networking more advantageous than professional networking. Dissemination of curricular data is one of the best advantages according to 48% of the questionnaire’s respondents.

According to recruiters, Facebook enables the candidate to show a more personal and less professional/serious side of their personality since candidates post not only curricular information but also texts, pictures, groups and events of their interest. LinkedIn “gives a picture of a candidate’s professional journey” – H.R. recruiter, i.e., it is a virtual resume more standardized and with more options than a paper one. Despite that, “professionals will always appreciate personal interactions” - Jessica Key.

Another advantage of social networks is that “the candidates can benefit from a closer contact with the company they are applying for, as well as more and faster information about the company’s goals, culture and values” - H.R. recruiter.

Recruiters feel that there is too much information online, which makes talent hunting harder, especially because there is no filter to what people might post, “not everything is true” – I.T. recruiter. They also alert for the permanent character of online posts, which may “ruin their (candidates) chances of getting an interview” – H.R. recruiter. Candidates consider that misleading information online is a very negative feature of social media. Both of them see lack of privacy as a big disadvantage.

Even though job offers published on social networks have a greater response when it comes to the recruiters’ tool of choice to find an applicant for a job the opinions are not unanimous. One prefers LinkedIn, because it “gives you more information about a candidate’s professional path” – H.R. recruiter. The other prefers job’s posting sites, since they restrict the curricular features necessary to enter the interview competition.

Regarding confidentiality, privacy and security offered by social networks both recruiters agree that “people should be careful about their sensitive data”- I.T. recruiter. The human resources consultant says “you shouldn’t divulge information that endangers your security or that could be used against you”. This might be the reason why most candidates do not post as much superfluous information like hobbies, events or pictures as curricular and contact information.



	<b>Recruiters</b>	<b>Candidates</b>
<b>Uses Social Networks to find job candidates/ vacancy</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Preferred Social Networks</b>	LinkedIn	Facebook
<b>Data searched/ published</b>	Curricular information	Curricular information
<b>Good tool for contact</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Good tool to make a hiring decision</b>	No	No
<b>Social Networks advantages</b>	Networking and information	Networking
<b>Social Networks disadvantages</b>	Veracity and amount of information	Misleading information
<b>Tool of choice when seeking a candidate/job</b>	LinkedIn and job posting sites	Social networks and recruitment companies websites

Table VII – Recruiters vs. Candidates (Source: author)

## **7.2 – Discussion**

If someone is looking for a job the best bet is to create a LinkedIn profile even though Facebook might be also viewed and considered by recruiters. While professional accomplishments will contribute to positive view of one's profile, inappropriate comments or pictures will have the opposite effect; therefore candidates should work on a comprehensive "online resume" and reduce their personal data to the minimum. Is very important to stress that pictures and comments should be appropriate to be seen by a future employer. A beautiful and meaningful picture will not have much influence on a recruiter's choice but a rude or inappropriate image might ruin a candidate's chance of getting an interview.

Never the less, a LinkedIn profile will not get anyone a job it is just a path to get an interview so it should be seen as a step in the search for employment.

Once a candidate finds a company that he/she is eager to join there are many possibilities online to come into closer contact with the company and its employers (recruiters, bosses, etc.), such as joining the company's page or group in social networks.

## **7.3 – Study limitations**

This study is geographically limited since survey and interview respondents were Portuguese. This prevents the study from showing international conclusions and should only be considered for the Portuguese society.

It is limited in the matter that both recruiters work in the I.T. area, other recruiters might feel differently regarding to the questions asked.

Another limitation is the fact that judgmental and non-probability sampling technique cannot be considered a true representation of the population.

It is also important to mention that this study considered only few variables to determine the conclusions. Many other interesting/ relevant variables were set aside for different reasons such as the thesis dimension.

#### **7.4 – Recommendations for future research**

Online trends change very rapidly and data soon gets out-dated. What is the reality today may not be in a few months therefore is important to realize that this conclusion are not set in stone and should be challenged with more recent data.

Another recommendation would be to extend the study to a broader range of respondents instead of limiting it to Portuguese respondents.

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## **ANNEXES**

### **Annex A - Questionnaire**

This short questionnaire is a part of a study for a master's dissertation entitled “SOCIAL NETWORKS - ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ITS USE IN JOB HUNTING”. The study aims to optimize the use of social networks by job candidates. The collected data will be confidential. I appreciate your cooperation.

1) How old are you?

- ☐ < 18
- ☐ 18 – 25
- ☐ 26 – 35
- ☐ 36 – 45
- ☐ 46 – 55
- ☐ 56 – 65
- ☐ > 65

2) How long ago did you start working (in years)?

- ☐ < 2
- ☐ 2 – 4
- ☐ 5 – 10
- ☐ 11 – 20
- ☐ > 20

3) What is your educational level?

- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Master
- ☐ Ph. D.



4) What type of job are you looking for?

- ☐ Internship
- ☐ First job
- ☐ Temporary job
- ☐ Fixed-term job
- ☐ No term contract
- ☐ Company board

5) Which social networks do you use to search for a job? (You can choose more than one)

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ The talent city
- ☐ Hi5
- ☐ My Space
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I do not use

6) What type of data do you divulge on social networks? (You can choose more than one)

- ☐ Curricular information
- ☐ Contact information
- ☐ Photos
- ☐ Hobbies
- ☐ Events in which I participate
- ☐ Pictures and texts I am interested in

7) Do you consider social networks a good tool to be contacted by a recruiter?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8) Do you consider social networks a tool to decide between two candidates to a job?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9) What are the greatest advantages of social networking? (You can choose more than one)

- ☐ Social Networking
- ☐ Professional Networking
- ☐ Dissemination of curricular data
- ☐ Dissemination of personal data
- ☐ Entertainment

10) What are the worst disadvantages of social networking? (You can choose more than one)

- ☐ Privacy decrease
- ☐ Safety decrease
- ☐ Confidentiality decrease
- ☐ Misleading information
- ☐ Lack of personal contact

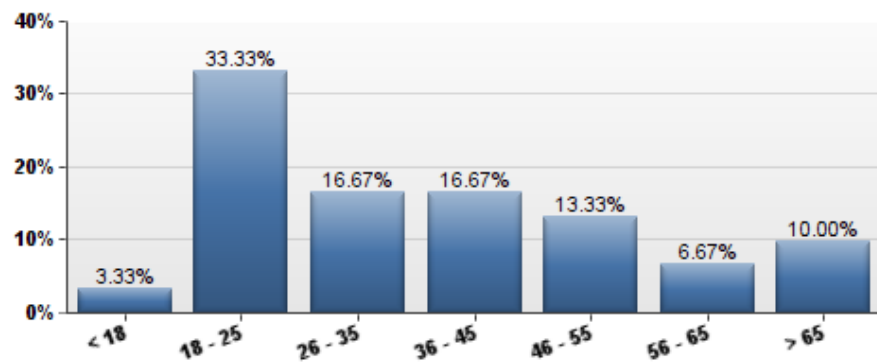
11) What tools do you prefer to use in job search? (You can choose more than one)

- ☐ Newspapers
- ☐ Recruitment companies websites
- ☐ Social Networks
- ☐ Hiring company

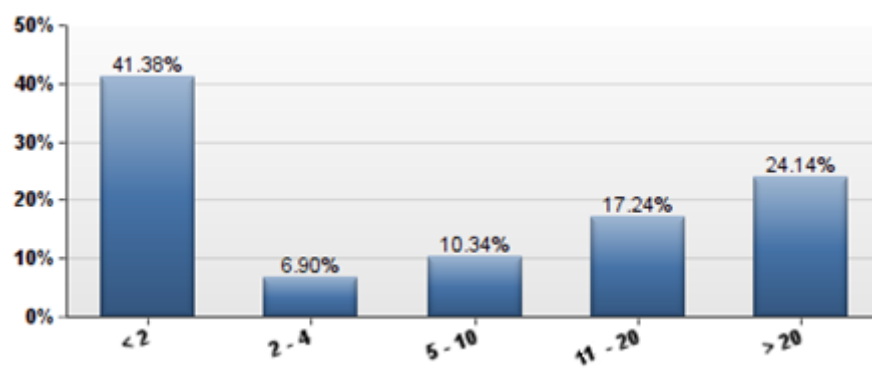
## Annex B – Questionnaire Results

### Sample profile

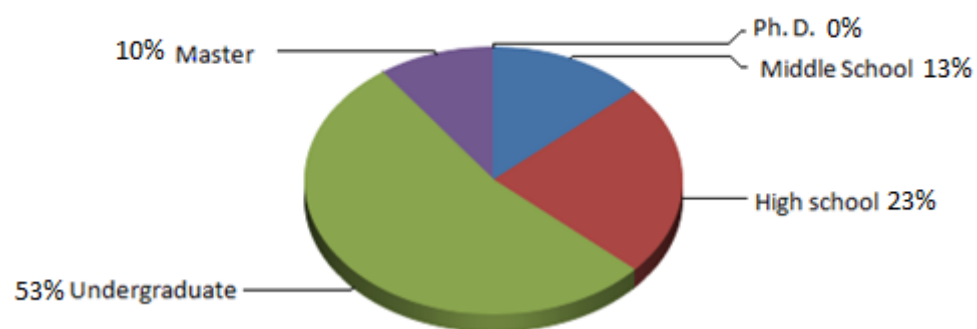
#### 1) Age



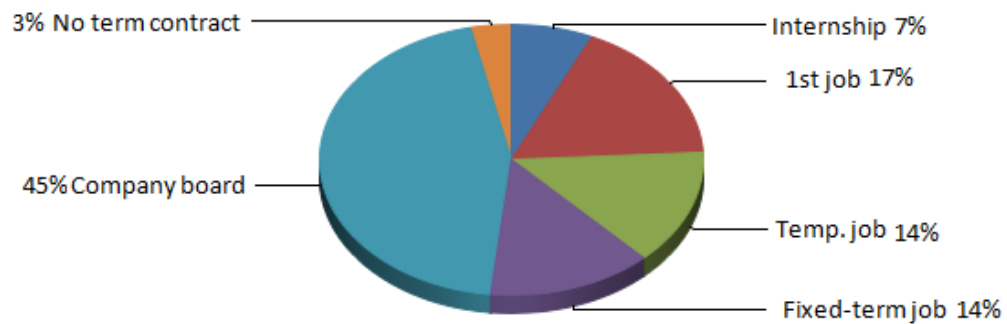
#### 2) Years of experience



#### 3) Educational Level



4) Type of job searched



Study Answers

5) Which social networks do you use to search for a job?

Answer		%
Facebook	<div></div>	63%
Linkedin	<div></div>	43%
The talent city	<div></div>	3%
Hi5		0%
My space		0%
Twitter		0%
Instagram		0%
Other	<div></div>	13%
Don't use	<div></div>	17%

6) What type of data do you divulge on social networks?

Answer		%
Curricular information	<div></div>	85%
Contact information	<div></div>	41%
Photos	<div></div>	56%
Hobbies	<div></div>	15%
Events in which I participate	<div></div>	37%
Pictures and texts I'm interested in	<div></div>	33%






7) Do you consider social networks a good tool to be contacted by a recruiter?

Answer		%
Yes		70%
No		30%






8) Do you consider social networks a tool to decide between two candidates to a job?

Answer		%
Yes		45%
No		55%





9) What are the greatest advantages of social networking?

Answer		%
Social Networking		64%
Professional Networking		56%
Dissemination of curricular data		48%
Dissemination of personal data		16%
Entertainment		40%

10) What are the worst disadvantages of social networking?

Answer		%
Privacy decrease		43%
Safety decrease		39%
Confidentiality decrease		39%
Misleading information		54%
Lack of personal contact		39%

11) What tools do you prefer to use in job search?

Answer		%
Newspapers		28%
Recruitment companies websites		52%
Social Networks		59%
Hiring company		34%

## **Annex C – Interview Questions**

- 1) For how long have you been a recruiter?
- 2) What kind of profiles do you recruit (in terms of experience, education and hierarchical level)?
- 3) Do you use social networks to investigate the candidates? Which ones?
- 4) What kind of data do you search on social networks?
- 5) Are there differences in the population that reaches every social network (example: social status, age, level of education)?
- 6) Do you use social networks as a way to decide between two candidates or as a way to exclude candidates?
- 7) What are the biggest advantages of social networking (particularly Facebook and LinkedIn) as a recruiter? And for the candidate?
- 8) What are the major disadvantages of social networking (particularly Facebook and LinkedIn) as a recruiter? And for the candidate?
- 9) What is your opinion regarding the confidentiality, privacy and security offered by social networks?
- 10) And regarding the veracity of the information?
- 11) Do job offers published on social networks have a greater response than those who follow other procedures?
- 12) Which is your tool of choice when seeking a candidate for a specific job? Why?

## **Annex D – Interview Recruitment Company**

- 1) For eight years.
- 2) I recruit experienced candidates, for high profile firms. Candidates don't always have a college degree but they always have many years of experience for that opening.
- 3) Of course. LinkedIn is definitely the most useful tool to understand the candidate's career path and purpose. I also like using Facebook. There, people feel more free to speak their mind and might express their true self. This helps me grasp their profile and understand if they're right for the job.
- 4) Past jobs, projects that the candidate has been involved in and any kind of data that helps me understand the candidate's personality and profile, such as comments and photos.
- 5) I feel that LinkedIn is more restricted network. Mainly for business professional. Nevertheless, it is getting more diffused, true population and other types of profiles are using this network nowadays. All types of people use Facebook.
- 6) Not so much to decide between two candidates. But I do use it to exclude profiles from my candidates list.
- 7) On Facebook you get to see a side of the candidate you wouldn't see in an interview. LinkedIn gives a picture of a candidate's professional journey. With social networks the candidates can benefit from a closer contact with the company they are applying for, as well as more and faster information about the company's goals, culture and values.
- 8) There is so much information online that sometimes it takes a while to find something interesting.  
  
Candidates should be careful with what they post because recruiters tend to search meticulously all available information and things like inappropriate comments/photos might ruin their chances of getting an interview.
- 9) All it takes is common sense. You shouldn't divulge information that endangers your security or that could be used against you.
- 10) You should interview the candidate to confirm the data.
- 11) I believe they do because they reach more people.
- 12) LinkedIn is the one that gives you more information about a candidate's professional path.



## **Annex E – Interview IT Company**

- 1) For seven years.
- 2) Usually I recruit people that went to college. Some have work experience; others are looking for their first job. So the hierarchical level might be an internship or a high level job.
- 3) I use LinkedIn.
- 4) I search candidates resumes, their professional or scholar journey.
- 5) The reason why I use LinkedIn it's because I believe it is a strictly professional network that contains the right profiles (in terms of type of jobs candidates looking for).
- 6) Neither. I prefer personal contact to decide. I use it to find candidates that might fit my needs.
- 7) For both recruiters and candidates the major advantage is the amount of people that browse that network every day.
- 8) As a recruiter you have to be aware that people can post whatever they want and not everything is true. As a candidate you should try to protect your data. Once something is in the web is very hard to take it back.
- 9) I believe I answer this before. People should be careful about their sensitive data.
- 10) There is no verification of data made by the networks administrators. Therefore we can't expect that all data is accurate or true.
- 11) They might have a greater response but there aren't many processes that evolve in to an interview based on an informal post. Jobs announced in colleges (via e-mail) or in job posting sites tend to have (not a bigger but) a better response.
- 12) Job posting sites because respondents usually match the required job skills.